



Focus on Safety — Cool Tips for a Safe Summer Trip

Of the many great things about summertime, few match the fun of a family road trip. Before you hook up that new boat or camper, or hit the road with your family or friends in your car, SUV, pickup, or RV, take the time to review some summer travel safety tips. Prevention and planning may take a little time up front, but will spare you from dealing with the consequences of a breakdown—or worse yet, a highway crash—later.

Before You Go

Regular maintenance such as tune-ups, oil changes, battery checks, and tire rotations go a long way toward preventing breakdowns. If your vehicle has been serviced according to the manufacturer's recommendations, it should be in good condition to travel. If not—or you don't know the service history of the vehicle you plan to drive—schedule a preventive maintenance checkup with your mechanic right away.

Owners may not always know their recalled vehicle still needs to be repaired. NHTSA's VIN Lookup Tool lets you enter a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to quickly learn if a specific vehicle has not been repaired as part of a safety recall in the last 15 years. Check for recalls on your vehicle by searching now: <https://vinrcl.safercar.gov/vin/>.

When your vehicle is well maintained, getting it ready for a road trip is relatively quick and easy. However, regardless of how well you take care of your ride, it's important to perform the following basic safety checks before you go on a road trip:

Vehicle Safety Checklist

Tires — *Air pressure, tread wear, spare*

Check your vehicle's tire inflation pressure at least once a month, when your tires are cold (they haven't been driven on for three hours or more)—and don't forget to check your spare, if your vehicle is equipped with one. The correct pressure for your tires is listed on a label on the driver's door pillar or doorframe or in the vehicle owner's manual—**the correct pressure for your vehicle is NOT the number listed on the tire itself**. A tire doesn't have to be punctured to lose air. All tires naturally lose some air over time. In fact, underinflation is the leading cause of tire failure.

Also, take five minutes to inspect your tires for signs of excessive or uneven wear. If the tread is worn down to 2/32 of an inch, it's time to replace your tires. Look for the built-in wear bar indicators or use the penny test to determine when it's time to replace your tires. Place a penny in the tread with Lincoln's head upside down. If you can see the top of Lincoln's head, your vehicle needs new tires. If you find uneven wear across the tires' tread, it means your tires need rotation and/or your wheels need to be aligned before you

travel. For more information on tire safety, visit NHTSA's [TireWise](#) page.

Belts and Hoses — *Condition and fittings*

Look under the hood and inspect all belts and hoses to make sure there are no signs of bulges, blisters, cracks, or cuts in the rubber. High summer temperatures accelerate the rate at which rubber belts and hoses degrade, so it's best to replace them now if they show signs of obvious wear. While you're at it, check all hose connections to make sure they're secure.

Wiper Blades — *Wear and tear on both sides*

After the heavy toll imposed by winter storms and spring rains, windshield wipers may need to be replaced. Like rubber belts and hoses, wiper blades are vulnerable to the summer heat. Examine your blades for signs of wear and tear. If they aren't in top condition, invest in new ones before you go.

Cooling System — *Coolant level and servicing*

The radiator in your vehicle needs water and antifreeze (coolant) to keep your engine functioning properly. When your car hasn't been running and the engine is completely cool, carefully check your coolant level to make sure the reservoir is full. In addition, if your coolant is clear, looks rusty, or has particles floating in it, it is time to have your cooling system flushed and refilled. If your coolant looks sludgy or oily, immediately take your vehicle to a mechanic.

Fluid Levels — *Oil, brake, transmission, power steering, and windshield washer fluids*

Check your vehicle's oil level periodically. As with coolant, if it's time or even nearly time to have the oil changed, now would be a good time to do it. In addition, check the following fluid levels: brake, automatic transmission or clutch, power steering, and windshield washer fluid. Make sure each reservoir is full; if you see any signs of fluid leakage, take your vehicle in to be serviced.

Lights — *Headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers, interior lights, and trailer lights*

See and be seen! Make sure all the lights on your vehicle are in working order. Check your headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers, and interior lights. Towing a trailer? Be sure to also check your trailer including brake lights and turn signals. Trailer light connection failure is a common problem and a serious safety hazard.

Air Conditioning — *A/C check*

Check A/C performance before traveling. Lack of air conditioning on a hot summer day affects people who are in poor health or are sensitive to heat, such as children and older adults.

Protect the Children

When traveling with children, take every precaution to keep them safe. Make sure car seats and booster seats are properly installed and that any children riding with you are in the car seat, booster seat, or seat belt best suited to protect them. All children 13 and younger should ride in the back seat. And remember, all passengers in your vehicle should be buckled up!

Click on NHTSA's [child passenger safety recommendations](#) to find out how to select the right seat for your child's age and size. To learn more and find a free inspection site near you, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/cps/cpsfitting/index.cfm.

Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time.

All passengers must agree to wear their seat belts every time they are riding or driving in your vehicle. Set the example by always wearing your seat belt.

Summer Safety Alert!

There are other dangers to children in and around cars that you should know. One of those dangers is hyperthermia, or heatstroke. Heatstroke can occur when a child is left unattended in a parked vehicle. Never leave children alone in the car—not even for a few minutes or with the engine running. Vehicles heat up quickly; if the outside temperature is in the low 80s°, the temperature inside the vehicle can reach deadly levels in just a few minutes – even with a window rolled down. A child's body temperature rises 3 to 5 times faster than that of an adult.

Even when children are not inside a vehicle, it can be dangerous for them. Before you back out of a driveway or parking spot, prevent backovers by walking around your vehicle to check for children running and playing. When children play, they are often oblivious to cars and trucks around them. They may believe that motorists will watch out for them. Furthermore, every vehicle has a blind zone. As the size and height of a vehicle increases, so does the blind zone area. Large vehicles, trucks, SUVs, RVs, and vans, are more likely than cars to be involved in backovers.

Be sure to lock your vehicle's doors at all times when it's not in use. Put the keys somewhere that children can't get access to them. Children who enter vehicles on their own with no adult supervision can be killed or injured by power windows, seat belt entanglement, vehicle rollaway, heatstroke or trunk entrapment.

Visit www.safercar.gov/parents to find out more about how to keep children safe in and around vehicles.

Stay Alert!

Remember that long trips can be tough on children—so, in turn, tough on you. Plan enough time to stop along the way to take a group stretch, get something to eat and drink, return any calls or text messages, and change drivers if you're feeling tired or drowsy. Consider staying overnight at a hotel or family resort. It can make the trip easier and less tiring for everyone—and more of an adventure, too. Bring along a few favorite books, videos, or soft toys to keep little ones content and occupied. The trip will seem to go faster for them, and keep you from being distracted every time they ask, "Are we there yet?"

On the Road

Long-distance driving can be tedious, and it's tempting to look for something to distract you to make the time pass faster. But when you're the driver, your only responsibility is to keep your eyes on the road, hands on the wheel, and concentration on the task of driving. No one's lives—neither your passengers nor any other road users—are worth a phone call or text. And remember, law enforcement officers across the Nation are now using innovative strategies to aggressively enforce their State distracted driving laws.

Share the Road

Warmer weather attracts many types of roadway users, including motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

While they have the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as every motorist, these road users are more vulnerable because they do not have the protection of a car or truck.

Leave more distance between you and a motorcycle—3 or 4 seconds worth. Motorcycles are much lighter than other vehicles and can stop in much shorter distances. Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows other road users to anticipate your movement and find a safe lane position.

Be mindful of pedestrians. Things to remember as a driver:

- You can encounter pedestrians anytime and anywhere.
- Distracted walking is becoming part of the distracted traffic epidemic. Keep your eyes open for distracted pedestrians.
- Pedestrians can be very hard to see – especially in bad weather or at night.
- Stop for pedestrians who are in a crosswalk, even if it's not marked. This will help drivers in the other lanes see the pedestrian in time to stop.
- Cars stopped in the street may be stopped to allow pedestrians to cross. Do not pass if there is any doubt.

- Do not assume that pedestrians can see you or that they will act predictably. They may be distracted, or physically or mentally impaired.
- When you are turning and waiting for a "gap" in traffic, watch for pedestrians who may have moved into your intended path.
- Be especially attentive around schools and in neighborhoods where children are active. Drive the way you want people to drive in front of your own home.

Avoid Bad Driving Behaviors

Distracted Driving

The focus of any driver, at all times, should be driving.

Distracted driving is anything that takes your attention away from driving. The most obvious forms of distraction are cell phone use, texting while driving, eating, drinking, talking with passengers, and using in-vehicle technologies and portable electronic devices.

Set down some safety rules with your co-drivers before you hit the road. These rules should include refraining from activities that take your eyes and attention off the road. Insist that your co-drivers agree to make every effort to move to a safe place off of the road before using a cell phone—even in an emergency.

Impaired Driving

Every 52 minutes (or 28 times a day), someone in the United States dies in an alcohol-impaired-driving crash. Alcohol and drugs can impair perception, judgment, motor skills, and memory – the skills critical for safe and responsible driving. Deaths caused by impaired driving are preventable, and too many lives are tragically cut short in traffic crashes involving drunk and drugged driving. Impaired driving not only puts the driver at risk – it threatens the lives of passengers and all others who share the road. Every year it causes the deaths of thousands of loved ones. Be responsible; don't drink and drive. Illegal drugs, as well as prescription and over-the-counter medications, can be just as deadly on the road as alcohol. If you plan to drink, designate a sober driver before going out. Get NHTSA's new SaferRide app from the iTunes store (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/saferride/id950774008?mt=8>) or Google Play (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nhtsa.SaferRide>). SaferRide allows users to call a taxi or friend for a ride, and will even help users identify their location so they can be picked up.

Emergency Roadside Kit

Even a well-maintained vehicle can break down, so it's advisable to put together an emergency roadside kit to carry with you. A cell phone tops the list of suggested emergency kit contents since it allows you to call for help when and where you need it. Suggested emergency roadside kit contents:

- Cell phone and car charger
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Flares and a white flag
- Jumper cables
- Tire pressure gauge
- Jack (and ground mat) for changing a tire
- Work gloves and a change of clothes
- Basic repair tools and some duct tape (for temporarily repairing a hose leak!)
- Water and paper towels for cleaning up
- Nonperishable food, drinking water, and medicines
- Extra windshield washer fluid
- Maps
- Emergency blankets, towels and coats